

Social Questions

BULLETIN



of the Methodist Federation for Social Service (unofficial), an organization which rejects the method of the struggle for profit as the economic base for society; which seeks to replace it with social-economic planning in order to develop a society without class distinctions and privileges.

VOLUME 34

FEBRUARY, 1944

NUMBER 2

SECURE FULL EMPLOYMENT!

Next to winning the war the American people are agreed most on preventing the return of mass unemployment. We remember the bread lines, the apples, homeless men sleeping in churches. We have not forgotten what Hoover and McArthur did to the Bonus Marchers, nor the plan for General Moseley to ride into Washington on a white horse. Reports from every front confirm the soldier who wrote: "The big worry of the vet is whether he is going to have a job when he gets home." The Twentieth Century Fund Survey of 137 agencies at work on post-war problems, summing up the voice of our people, said first: "We want no more depression, we want work." We also know that the President was right in saying: "People who are hungry and are out of a job are the stuff of which dictators are made."

Yet we are farther today from winning full employment than we were two years ago. Then anti-fascists in government, business, labor and religion were agreed on the objective. Today business has changed its goal. Then we were going to hold the line against inflation, today that line is breaking. If it goes, mass unemployment comes. Then we were planning an offensive against the tendency in the profit economy to restrict production and throw people out of work. Today we haven't even a plan for jobs for the soldiers coming home, and the workers being discharged, every week. If the war ends suddenly we will be thrown into confusion and suffering that may soon become chaos and disaster.

THE VOICE OF RELIGION

Religious statements on post-war aims issued since we entered the shooting phase of the war proclaim the right of all men to work and obtain a livelihood. Some affirm the corresponding duty to work and the obligation of the community to provide for all the opportunity for socially useful work. These affirmations are based upon law—divine and natural, and upon the gospel principles of the equal right of all to the development of personality and the need for a brotherly community. Characteristic utterances: The Inter-American Seminar on Social Studies (Catholic), Sept. 15, '42, agreed that the working people "must have economic security against the risks, personal and social, that prevent their gaining a living." The American Institute of Judaism, Dec. 24, '42, declared that "Essential to the achievement of the abundant life for all are the right to work and to equality of eco-

nomic opportunity. . . . The problem of unemployment must not be allowed to develop in the post-war world as it did after the last war. Employment can be provided in our time to every person able and willing to work." A program to this end was proposed. The Conference on a Just and Durable Peace, March '42, called by the Federal Council of Churches, said, "Every member and family of the human race have a right to steady employment . . ." Unofficial groups usually add "meaningful" or "creative" employment.

The Friends Conference on Peace and Reconstruction, Sept. '42, came out squarely for "Full Employment". It stated that "Unemployment such as the western world has experienced in the last two decades could not be tolerated in a society given over to the discovery of the will of God." It added that the attainment of full employment, and other objectives set forth by the conference, "Necessitates a shift of emphasis from production for pecuniary gain to production for consumption as the goal of the economic process."

GOVERNMENT PROPOSALS

During this period the government was setting up the same objectives. It recognized that a durable peace depends as much upon economic security as upon a workable form of international organization. So the Lend Lease agreements call for mutual expansion of production and employment. In his message to Congress, Jan. 7, '42, the President defined the Atlantic Charter's "Freedom from want" as meaning, among other things, "Full employment for all who want to work." He put this first in his Social Security Program, March 10, '43. The first article in his Economic Bill of Rights just submitted to Congress is "The right to a useful and remunerative job."

In November '40 the President requested Congress to provide for a study of post-war defense planning. The National Resources Planning Board was set up as a clearing house and coordinating center for government and private agencies, without authority to initiate plans. It helped establish planning boards in 43 states, and coordinated the planning of 5 cabinet departments and 11 federal agencies. In its report of Jan. '42, and in several pamphlets, it made full employment the first objective of post-war planning and suggested the outlines of a program. It showed that the necessary production could be reached. It said that this required teamwork between government, business, workers, farmers. But winning full employment takes more than the expression of religious principles or the shaping of a technical proce-

ture. It is a political battle. Early in '43 Congress cut off the appropriation for the NRPB and its offices closed in August.

Thereupon, with the usual outcries about bureaucrats and crackpots, identical resolutions were passed in Senate and House calling for special committees to plan for reconstruction. Nothing happened. Speaker Rayburn is now calling for a fact finding committee to be aided by representatives of business, labor and agriculture. Again "too little and too late." It is action that is needed. On Oct. 18, '43, the President signed an executive order authorizing government agencies to plan and make requests to the Bureau of Budget for a three-year program. Some states have made job surveys. If these can be turned into actual employment, without a coordinating national plan they are but drops in the bucket for millions thirsty for jobs when the war ends. They are not even meeting the present emergency.

BUSINESS ACTS

The killing of national planning for full employment was accomplished by the political representatives of the business group that controls the National Association of Manufacturers. Their policy, expounded by Chairman George of the Senate Finance Committee before the Chamber of Commerce of the U. S., April 4, '43, is to attack official planning for full employment as more New Deal deficit spending and to insist that business can do the job if tax laws are revised downward to permit private enterprise to function. Matthew Woll, voicing the position taken by his colleagues on the Executive Council of the A F of L, added that the government was jeopardizing the opportunity of obtaining employment under private industry by its tax policy.

Another part of the offensive against the cooperative planning proposed by the N.R.P.B. is the businessmen's Committee for Economic Development organized by Jesse Jones, Secretary of Commerce and head of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation. He provides it with office space and one of his aides on leave as executive secretary. It is trying to get industry, plant by plant, to plan to produce the goods and provide the jobs that will keep the nation at work. The Department of Commerce helps out with a booklet: "Community Action for Post-war Jobs and Profits." The CED claims over 15,000 business leaders enlisted, with over 1,000 regional, district, county and community chairmen. It holds many meetings and makes industry and plant surveys showing how many jobs can be added to the normal pre-war number when war orders are finished. These are beginning to show the organization of sales campaigns for this purpose. Unchecked, by coordinated government planning, these lead naturally to the over expansion which is the forerunner of disaster. Thus "let business do it" leads toward the mass unemployment its progressive, intelligent section desires to prevent.

A doubt about the future appears in the speech of the President of the CED at a recent dinner of the NAM. He said: "Let's stop using the words full production, full employment. If full employment means a job for every man and woman who is able to work then it is not desirable in a functioning economy." The statement appears in academic form in a pamphlet of the Brookings Institution, a research organization which is a part of the brain trust of liberal big business: "In a dynamic

society full employment does not imply complete employment of the labor force. Several millions would, for one reason or another, not be working at a given moment." To the Investment Bankers' Association it was put more bluntly by a member: "Full employment would be incompatible with the free enterprise system which carries with it the right to a normal float of unemployed." McClure's Syndicate, serving many newspapers, added that "100% employment and full factory capacity are . . . not only beyond reach but also socially undesirable."

By the Brookings estimate "the normal unemployment" of our present economy a year after the war will be 3-4 million. That is, providing industry can supply 8 million more jobs than it did in 1940 when we had 9 million unemployed. Sudden collapse, or expansion and depression will leave us with 10-15 million out of work. The acceptance of a situation like this is admission that the profit economy does not permit those who administer and defend it to be the decent kind of human beings that most of them want to be. The best they can offer us spells mass unemployment. Are we then to sit still and watch it coming when we know that it means the destruction of souls and families by enforced idleness? How much better does that make modern society than the savage tribes who killed those who were too old to work?

WHAT LABOR WANTS

Labor has a different course of action. One point where A F of L and CIO are agreed is on the goal of full employment. Presidents Green and Murray told the NAM leaders at its annual dinner that America's first post-war objective should be jobs for all and that management and labor should work together to give all the people economic security and a better standard of living. At the recent CIO conference on post-war employment Sidney Hillman, head of its Political Action Committee pointed out that "Only full employment can assure farmers a market for their produce and business—big and small — customers for its products." Then President Patton of the Farmer's Union set forth two main requisites for full employment of the farming population. One is maximum use of all human and material resources now available in the USA, meshing with a similar program in other nations and between nations. The other is a national income resulting from such maximum use, in the neighborhood of 200 billions, with full employment at fair wages, salaries and incomes for a labor force ranging up to 62.5 million persons in agriculture, trade and transportation. He contended that the 100 billion income goal set by President Sloan of General Motors means a return to the farm foreclosures and general poverty of the Hoover days. But the objective of a high living standard for the nation's workers opens the possibility of an immense increase in land cultivation to supply the new markets, and the higher standards of rural communities.

Both A F of L and CIO have done much work in studies and plans for post-war employment, particularly on the subject of reconversion of war plants to peace needs. In August last the A F of L Executive Council recommended that the WPB be directed to begin plans for the reconversion of industry, by industries and plant by plant, "so we can be all set for action when the war ends." Murray of the CIO recently stated that furnaces are idle in four Republic Steel plants and proposed more

use of steel for civilian manufacturers. A few voices in the business world have made similar proposals and the WPB appears about to move.

AF of L and CIO also agree on the principle of joint planning by government, business, labor and farmers, despite a few leaders still clinging to the old line of action independent of government. Cooperative planning is also supported by the National Planning Association and by the National Industrial Advertiser's Association. Both labor groups agree further on the demand for a central agency, coordinating all government departments, to handle reconversion and carry out plans for full employment. This need was affirmed by Vice-President Wallace in his recent speech to the CIO in which he looked forward to a "peace which will come through jobs for all and the full use of the resources of this world for the benefit of all the people of the world." Agreeing that the "principal goal" of a planned economy is full employment, the Joint Commission for Post-War Planning of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (AFofL) and the National Electrical Contractors' Association also says that there should be a central agency, with government, business, labor and agriculture represented, to handle this problem, a national reconversion commission.

PRESENT NEEDS

Meantime disabled and unemployed veterans are with us, facing a planless situation. Over a million have been demobilized since Pearl Harbor. Every week 7,000 more are returning to civil life. With the end of the European war in sight government contracts are being cut. As the President has just reported, industrial demobilization is beginning, adding to the unemployed and reducing the veterans' chances for jobs. Two hundred returned soldiers are already on the relief rolls in New York City, 12,000 more have appealed to Veterans' organizations to get action on their cases. They cannot afford the delay from the lack of coordination between the Six Federal Agencies handling the matter.

Last October the President asked Congress for early action on a post-war program to make it financially possible for every man and woman who has served honorably for a minimum period in the armed forces to get a year's education or industrial training at government expense. No action. The next month he asked for legislation to provide reasonable and uniform mustering out pay and uniform allowances for a reasonable job seeking period; also coverage for time spent in military service in social security old age and survivors benefit funds. Mustering out pay will be provided before the election.

The only thing done on jobs is the clause in the Selective Service Act which says a man is to get his job back, or an equal one, unless "the employer's circumstances have so changed as to make it impossible or unreasonable to do so." Never more than a pious hope, this isn't even that, after all the changes the war has made in industry. Some of the unions are trying to find jobs for disabled soldiers, with some employers helping. Some corporations in stable position have given returning employees double seniority for time spent in the war. The U. S. Employment Service gives veterans priority in application for jobs on its list. This is all we have to show for the fine promises and solemn vows of two years ago. Unless this situation is changed by the time victory is

won in Europe the battle against unemployment will be lost.

The first thing is to refuse to change our objective at the bidding of business and its economists. In speeches, resolutions, letters, conversation let the goal of full employment stand out clear. The present situation shows that the profit economy can never provide the creative employment and abundant living which is the goal of both religion and labor. But it is still possible to prevent the corrosion of spirit, the breaking of family life, the menace of fascism that follows enforced idleness. The remedy against the slack in capitalist employment, the brake in prosperity and the cushion in depression, has long been known. It is a continuing program of public works, social services and cultural development.

On May 24, '43, the President asked only for authority to spend up to 85 millions to stimulate public works programs in cooperation with state and local authorities. Congress refused. It would not even keep CCC camps open in skeleton form against emergencies. He has just proposed a national system of highways to give continuous employment to the shifting number whom private enterprise cannot hire. The objection to this, and to meeting even more important needs by public enterprise, is the cost in taxation. Again it is the few against the many. A public works program big enough to close the employment gap left by private enterprise is practicable. It can be done if upper bracket incomes are reduced to a moderate luxury level by taxation, and by an economic policy of low prices, low profits and large output. Let us then swell the demand for that program.

The next point to win in the battle against unemployment is a central, coordinating organization, for the reconversion of wartime industry and agriculture to peacetime needs. The question is not: to plan or not to plan, but who is to plan and for what purposes. Our choice now is democratic planning for the meeting of our needs and the realization of our ideals or monopolistic planning for profit and power. Business planning means not only more unemployment but more concentrated power. Privately it is admitted, as the Truman Committee report says, that business is not big enough to finance reconversion alone. Government aid is needed and expected. The reactionaries want to use the nation's capital without the nation's control over its use. Then they will give us another runaway boom ending in another crash. In seeking economic stability the deciding question is how much of the national income is to go to investment and how much to consumption. Is this to be settled as before, with still worse results, by the struggle for profit? Isn't it time to decide it by democratic plan?

Democratic planning for economic security and the abundant life is the instrument for the realization of our religious ideals. Like the battery that charges itself while running, it develops the power to accomplish our chosen ends as we cooperate in using it. Thus planning becomes the fusion of human lives, not words and figures on paper. Then let the people of the churches cooperate fully in democratic planning for full employment. When the feudal period was breaking up, the Poor Preachers who laid the foundations of the religious reformation of which we are the heirs stood with the dispossessed peasants at great cost. Let us not fail those whom the breakdown of the capitalist period is today dispossessing of the right to work.

In Appreciation of Charles C. Webber

I wish to express my very great appreciation for the services of Charles C. Webber during the years he has been with the Methodist Federation for Social Service. He is an embodiment of all the qualities necessary for the accomplishment of the tasks to which the Federation has devoted itself. He is thoroughly informed as to labor situations in this country, is of rare courage in dealing with those situations and yet possesses to an unusual degree the tact which is the outcome of complete understanding, and the remarkable good sense which includes a sense of humor. Moreover, he possesses a sacrificial spirit which is a mark of entire sincerity. At many a crisis he has had to face personal dangers of which only his intimate acquaintances have known. The Federation can never adequately discharge the debt of obligation due him for his wonderfully creative service during all these years.

FRANCIS J. McCONNELL.

On July 1, 1936, Charles C. Webber, member of the New York East Conference, in response to the invitation of the Executive Committee, became Executive and Field Secretary of the MFSS.

His task has not been an easy one but he has not been perturbed by difficulties. He has gone steadily forward, courageous and undaunted, complaining of no hardship, in a work that has involved no little personal sacrifice. Numerous messages have come from Federation members, since notice of his resignation was published, bearing witness to the love and esteem in which he is held. Typical of many is this statement from the pastor of one of the largest and most prominent of our churches: "Charlie Webber has not only been efficient in his work but prophetic in his leadership. He has gone into church groups where there was much antagonism and has met them with such wisdom and Christian spirit that they have discovered a new approach to the purposes of the Kingdom of God."

We are confident that we voice the sentiment of our organization as a whole as we express gratitude and appreciation of the service rendered by our Secretary. Our regard and good wishes go with him in his new work.

For the Executive Committee by the *Ad Interim Administrative Committee*, Wade Crawford Barclay, Chm., Ralph B. Umy, Lester W. Auman.

Membership Dues Needed

On December 1 when Secretary Charles C. Webber's resignation took effect all bills were paid to date; there were no bank obligations outstanding; and a balance was in the treasury. The Executive Committee is concerned that the Federation shall not come to the May meeting in debt. As of February 1, we are a little more than even. The *ad interim* program depends upon the members. Office activities will be determined by receipts. Membership dues, \$5, \$4, \$2, \$1, and supplementary contributions are needed now!

Circulate Leaflets Now

Now is the time to begin to get the leaflets "Six Battles for Peace" into circulation. The issues involved are live issues today. The national scene is constantly shifting. Materials presenting current data are likely to be out of date within a few weeks. The need is for immediate action.

The first two of six leaflets — "Stop Inflation" and "Secure Full Employment" — are now ready for mailing. The remaining four leaflets we expect to have ready at monthly intervals.

The New York Conference MFSS Branch has led the way, with an order for 750 copies of each leaflet, as issued. Will other Conference Groups do as well? Or better?

Any really interested member of the Federation should be able to distribute one hundred copies. Displayed on literature tables, or announced at WDCCS meetings, adult class sessions, youth meetings, peace committee meetings, at least this number should readily be disposed of at three cents each.

Final Decision

On January 26, 1944, the National Labor Relations Board issued a Certification to the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America declaring that the employees of the Jobbers Pants Company, Plants 1 and 2, at Martinsville, Virginia, had selected the officials of the Union to bargain collectively for them with the company's officials.

Send Your Suggestions!

Suggestions are invited from members on plans for future organization for social education and action in the Methodist Church. What do you think should be done?

Certainly this is no time for The Methodist Church to do nothing. The need for Christian social teaching and effective action is no less now than in 1907 when the Methodist Federation was first organized. Having led the way a third of a century ago, shall the Methodist Church do less in this day when a world crisis is upon us? Certain forces of reaction are girding for action. War weariness will affect many and will contribute to apathy and indifference. Let the Church be alert and more active than ever before. Is this your thought? What do you suggest?

Social Questions BULLETIN

Issued monthly, except July, August and September. The general policies of this publication are determined by the Executive Committee of the Methodist Federation for Social Service, subject to approval by the National Committee of the Federation. The selection of topics and material is committed to the Secretaries who are responsible to the Federation and to the public for its accuracy.

Membership \$1.00 per year
Special rate to student groups.

SECRETARY
Harry F. Ward

OFFICERS

Bishop Francis J. McConnell, President
Harris Franklin Rall, Vice-President
Gilbert Q. LeSourd, Secretary-Treasurer

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

E. Raymond Attebery	David D. Jones
Lester W. Auman	John C. Lazenby
James C. Baker	Halford E. Luccock
Wade C. Barclay	George L. Poor
Mary McLeod Bethune	H. M. Ratliff
Esther Bjornberg	Miriam Ristine
Gilbert S. Cox	Chester A. Smith
Margaret Forsyth	Ralph B. Umy
Amos B. Horlacher	Edgar M. Wahlberg
Ruth F. Wolcott	

YOUTH

Robert Boblilln Julia Moody

**The METHODIST FEDERATION
for SOCIAL SERVICE**

150 Fifth Avenue, New York City

Re-entered as second class matter October 9, 1941, at the Postoffice at New York, N. Y., under the Act of August 24, 1912.

312